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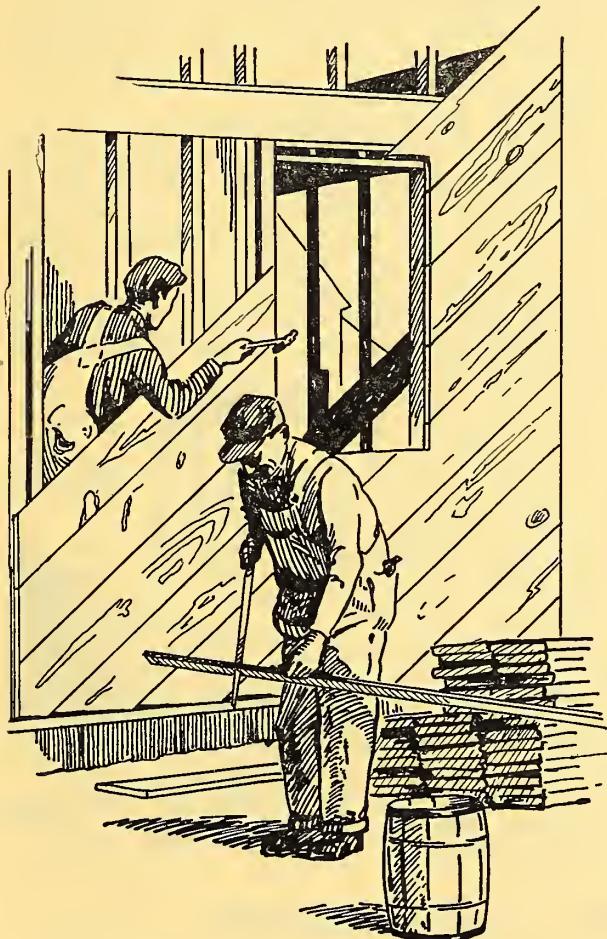
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Let's talk about . . .

TIMBER SUPPLIES

Is a timber shortage coming?

**A Discussion Guide on the Question of Public Regulation
of Timber-Cutting Practices to Make Sure of Permanent
Supplies of Wood.**



Are we going to have enough timber in this country after the war? Can our forests and farm woodlands meet our own needs? Can the United States help to supply the forest products that will be needed in large quantities for post-war reconstruction in foreign countries? What opportunities will there be for development of new timber-based industries? Can our woodlands contribute to an "economy of abundance," or will timber get scarcer and more costly each year?

Answers to questions like these concern every one of us. We can't get along without timber. We need it for thousands of things. It is the raw material of numerous industries, and that means it provides millions of jobs. Whether or not we keep our forests and woodlands producing may have far-reaching effects on our long-time prosperity and general welfare.

This discussion leaflet has to do mainly with the problem of post-war supplies of timber. We are concerned not only about timber supplies, however; we all have a stake in the forests because of their effects in conserving water supplies, regulating stream flow and reducing floods, preventing erosion, harboring wildlife and providing good hunting and fishing, affording opportunities for outdoor recreation, and contributing to the scenic beauty of our country. The measures which will promote abundant and continuing supplies of timber will generally provide those other values and benefits of forests.

How much we get from our forest lands in the future will depend on how we handle them now. Is some kind of Government program needed to regulate timber cutting? Should we take steps to prevent too early cutting of young trees and other bad practices, in order to keep our forests from going downhill? Should we apply rules for timber cutting that will keep forest lands in condition to keep on growing more timber?

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

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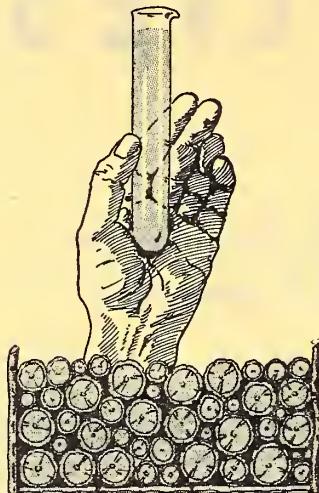
Prepared for discussion purposes in cooperation with Division of Program Study and Discussion, Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

June 1945

BACKGROUND FACTS

Post-war needs for wood will be heavy.—The war has been making heavy demands on our forests. It has proved that we can't get along without wood. Because wood for war is first, supplies for civilian use

have been cut to the bone, and a backlog of post-war civilian building and repair needs has been piling up. The huge reconstruction job in the war-torn countries of Europe and the Orient may bring continuing pressure on our forests to supply huge amounts of wood in addition to our domestic requirements.



Many of our industries are directly dependent upon the forests. Wood is needed in one form

or another in practically every other industry and enterprise, from publishing newspapers to operating farms, from ties for railroads to bats for baseball players, from cradles to coffins. Construction engineers are finding new and better ways of using lumber. And wood is becoming more and more important as a raw material for a growing number of other products, such as plastics, paper products, rayon, photographic film, and chemicals.

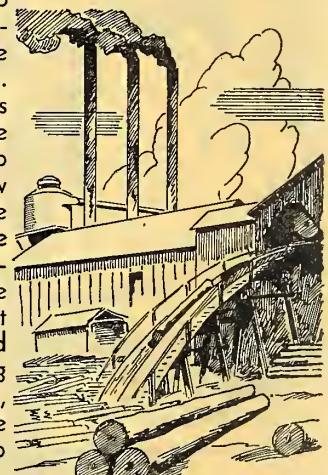
We are not growing timber as fast as we are using it.—For years the drain on our forests has exceeded the rate of growth; and the war undoubtedly has made this difference between amount of wood grown and amount used up all the greater. It is estimated that total drain on the Nation's forests in 1943 exceeded total usable growth by 50 percent. In saw timber (trees of size and quality for sawed lumber), the annual growth is not much more than half of what will probably be needed after the war.

We no longer have plenty of saw timber growing in all the forested sections of our country. More than two-thirds of the remaining saw timber is in the West, and western virgin-timber stands are being steadily reduced. In the eastern half of the country, which contains three-fourths of the Nation's land suitable for growing timber, forest-growing stock is generally below the level needed to keep up the present rate of cutting.

We still use destructive methods in cutting timber.—Since earliest days, timber cutting in this country has been mostly a matter of taking the trees which happened to be in the forest, rather than of maintaining the growth of a valuable crop. Although more and more forward-looking timber companies and many farm woodland owners in every region are proving that good forestry is a practical, paying proposition, wasteful cutting is still the common practice. Much young timber is cut too soon. Clear cutting is widespread—that is, cutting everything that can be sold, without leaving enough growing stock to keep the land producing more timber for future crops. By far the greater part of the cutting on privately owned forest land is still done with little regard for the future.

In regions where there are timber-using industries this may mean that after the timber is gone the mill will close, people will be out of jobs, local stores will lose their customers, farmers lose their local markets, and the entire community will decline. On farms, it may mean that once the farm woodland has been cut over it will no longer be a source of income. Instead of bringing in steady returns over the years, the farm woodland becomes idle land, and part of the farm area ceases to pay its way.

Timber can be grown.—With reasonably good management, our forests and farm woodlands can be built up so they can produce all of the wood that we are likely to need for all time to come. It is not necessary that we stop all cutting either of old-growth timber or second-growth to conserve our forests. However, in meeting our present needs we ought to apply cutting and management practices that will assure enough new growth to meet future needs. Timber can be grown as a crop. But we need to pay at least as much attention to its growth as we do now to harvesting it. Even if prompt measures are taken to grow more timber, it will take so many years for the new growth to reach usable size that a timber shortage meanwhile seems inevitable. There won't be enough for our needs. But there should be no need for us to have to get along with less wood forever, providing we take the necessary steps **now** to produce plenty of it.



PUBLIC REGULATION OF TIMBER CUTTING

The most urgent need is to stop harmful methods of cutting. Perhaps you have seen cases of good timberland laid waste in your own community. Has it been bad enough to warrant public attention?

The Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service have proposed public controls to prevent improper

methods of cutting and other practices that destroy the ability of the forests to keep growing timber crops. In 1941 a Joint Congressional Committee appointed to study the forest problem recognized a need for public regulation of timber cutting. Such public control has been endorsed by a number of private organi-

zations as well as public. The subject is being actively discussed among foresters, lumbermen, and people interested in conservation.

Under the plan recommended by the Department of Agriculture, Congress would set up Nation-wide standards of forest practice. These basic standards would be aimed at keeping privately owned forests and woodlands reasonably productive. They would require the use of cutting methods that will insure new timber growth after harvesting; except in special cases they would prohibit clear-cutting (that is, stripping the land of all trees) or premature or wasteful cutting in young stands. The standards would apply to all forest lands classed as suitable for commercial timber growing. That would include both large industrial holdings and many farm woodlands.

The individual States would have the opportunity to enact and enforce local laws regulating timber cutting, in line with the basic standards set up by a national law. The Federal Government would give the States financial aid to help them administer the State laws. Since forest types vary in different parts of the country, the specific rules of forest practice under these laws would have to be fitted to local forest conditions, but they would, of course, have to meet the basic Nation-wide standards. Local advisory boards, made up of representative forest owners and others familiar with local forest problems, would help decide what the local rules of practice should be.

Under this plan, individual owners of forest land would not be restricted as to when to cut timber that is ready to sell, nor would they be required to cut if they didn't want to. But the proposal would encourage and require them to observe certain rules of good forest practice if and when they did cut, in order to prevent the forest from being permanently damaged. Where forest land is clearly suitable for cultivated crops, it could, of course, be cleared for such purpose.

For the owner of a tract of pine timber, let us say, all this might mean that the rules would not allow him to cut trees promiscuously, but he would have to do a certain amount of selecting, reserving enough thrifty trees per acre for future growth and seed production.

He would have to use reasonable care not to damage the smaller trees that were to be left after cutting. And he would, of course, have to take reasonable precautions against fire. This is just an example. The rules would be different for different kinds of forest in various sections of the country—in old-growth Douglas fir in the Pacific Northwest, for instance, it is considered good practice to clear-cut if properly located blocks of timber are left standing to reseed the cut-over areas. But, in any event, the rules would always be aimed at keeping the forest growing more timber, rather than allowing it to be skinned off and the land left unproductive.

This, in essence, is the plan that has been proposed by the Department of Agriculture. It is a cooperative Federal-State approach to the problem of forest regulation. Some people interested in conservation have proposed that the Federal Government alone do the regulating. Others favor regulation of forest practices by the individual States, without Federal participation. The Department of Agriculture believes that Federal participation and leadership will be necessary if any program of forest regulation is to be effective on a national scale.

These proposals for forest regulation go only part of the way toward keeping forests productive. They seek only to stop further serious damage to the forests, by preventing harmful practices. They will not bring about the best type of scientific management on our forest lands. Therefore, it should be recognized that public regulation of cutting and related forest practices is only one feature in a real conservation program. More will be needed to assure abundant and continuing supplies of timber.

Other measures that have been recommended include more public forests, Government projects for post-war forest restoration and improvement, increased Government aid in fire control, technical advice, and other aids to private owners that will help them better to protect and manage their forests and woodlands. These, however, involve questions of such broad scope that they might well be topics for separate discussion.

TO GET SOMEWHERE IN DISCUSSION

As sponsor of the meeting.—Send this guide to group members beforehand. Select one of the group to serve as discussion leader. Make everyone comfortable. Chairs in a circle. Introduce everybody.

As member of the group.—Enter into the discussion freely. Tell what you know and think. Speak briefly and to the point. Listen well and give others a chance. Check the basis for your stand against or for points discussed. Everyone stay seated. Help keep the discussion from getting away from the subject.

As leader of discussion.—Study the guide in advance. Ask all others to do the same. Select a few to give special thought to certain parts. Prepare

your own discussion plan, and encourage timely questions. Draw on material in this guide whenever it is helpful.

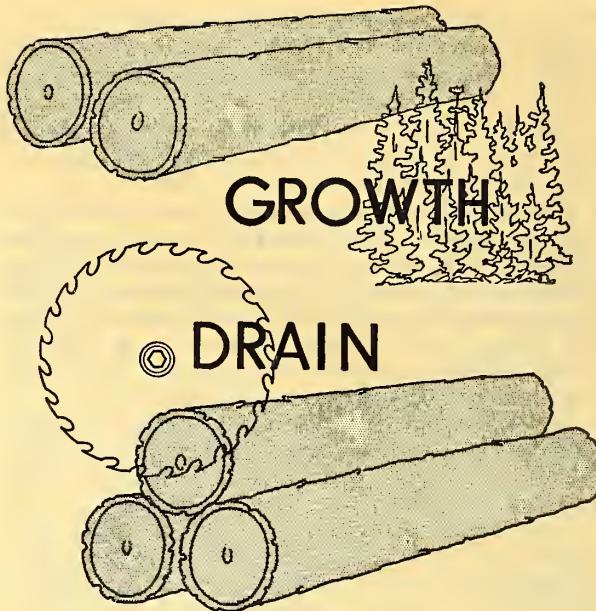
In the main, keep your own view out of the discussion. Aim at 100-percent participation. Sum up discussion now and then. Keep it on the track. You want to get somewhere. If you need another session to finish the job, plan one. Plan for action.

If more than 20 or 30 persons are expected, consider a panel discussion instead of the small-group type. Study U. S. Department of Agriculture leaflet DN-4 entitled "Suggestions for Panel Discussions." Ask your county agent for copies. Or write to the Division of Publications, Agricultural Extension Service, at your State college.

In February 1943, the entire town of Weirgate, Tex., was sold to a wrecking company after a life of only 25 years in which some 100,000 acres of virgin longleaf pine were stripped. Its sawmill and logging and turpentine operations are reported to have provided support for some 2,000 people.

Similarly, in 1943 lack of timber in the neighborhood forced the closing of the last big sawmill in Rhinelander, Wis., at the very time when the Nation's need for lumber was most acute. And the pulp mill operating in this forest community imports much of its wood some 700 miles from Canada.

More recently, a large lumber company in Portland, Oreg., representing 20 percent of that city's sawmill capacity, announced that it would soon cease operations and liquidate its holdings, because its timber supplies were about exhausted.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In a group discussion of the problem of post-war timber supplies, it is suggested that first a general review of the present forest situation for the country as a whole be made. (See Background Facts, above.) The proposal for public forest regulation can be outlined. The leader could bring out such factual information about forest conditions in the local community as members of the group may have. Questions such as the following may then be discovered to be the important issues, and taken up for discussion.

1. What is the local situation as to future timber supplies? Your State forester or the local office of the United States Forest Service may have some forest-survey data on timber growth in relation to drain and requirements that would be helpful.

Are there wood-using industries in your town (county or State)?

If there are, what is the number of wood-using plants, number of employees, or volume of production in comparison with earlier years? Do these show a downward trend?

Will your local wood-using industries be assured of permanent wood supplies, or is it likely that they will eventually have to be shut down for lack of raw material?

2. What has happened to timber and timber industries in other communities? Perhaps some members of the group have first-hand knowledge of localities where the general practice of good forest management guarantees that timber supplies will be permanent. Communities whose wood-using industries

obtain their timber mainly from national forests can count on a steady supply of raw material.

On the other hand, many communities are on the downgrade because of exhaustion of local timber supplies. Mill shut-downs have meant decline in population, or have caused serious unemployment. Large areas of cut-over land in depression years become tax delinquent, adding to the tax burden on remaining residents or undermining local government service. Perhaps there are such communities in your region.

What has been the experience of members of the group in other places? Do you know of communities that were hard hit when the timber gave out? How did the exhaustion of timber supplies affect employment? Tax delinquency? General welfare of the community?

Or do you know of places where the community is being benefited by good forest management? How about employment and business stability in such communities? Are the future prospects bright?

3. To what extent are we concerned with the timber resources of other areas? With the national timber situation?

We use forest products a lot more than most of us realize. Maybe some of us began to notice this during the war when the stores were sometimes short of paper bags, when some of the magazines wouldn't take new subscriptions because of paper limitations, when we couldn't always get boards for new shelves in the store-



room or for repairs to the porch steps; when war agencies were the only ones allowed to build new houses. These shortages were brought about by wartime conditions; but the decline of forest-growing stock is apt to cause shortages again one of these days. If forest resources dwindle, wood products naturally will become higher priced, and harder to get.

How much of the lumber we use in our community comes from other States or regions? What lumber do we use on the farm? Where does it come from? How have prices of building lumber changed in the last 10 years? Why? As forest products get scarcer and scarcer, what difference will it make in our individual business or our own personal welfare?

Can our community count on having enough wood right along at reasonable cost, even from distant sources, unless strong Nation-wide conservation measures are adopted?

If our community has a stake in producing lumber or in wood manufacture, how will a national scarcity of timber affect our future markets? Would it affect them adversely by encouraging people to use other materials in place of wood?

4. Is public regulation the only sure solution to the problem of forest depletion?

More and more timber owners are practicing good forestry. Some 10 million acres of industrial forest lands, mostly in the Pacific Northwest and the Southern States, are now signed up in a "tree farm" program sponsored by lumbermen's associations. The owners have agreed to protect their cut-over lands and follow certain practices that will promote continuous timber growth, including planting in some cases. Many farm woodlands are well managed, the owners planning to keep them growing timber and yielding steady income.

However, the acreage in tree farms is but a tiny portion of private forest land; there are 3½ million farm woodland owners and 880,000 nonfarm owners of forest land. Of the 139 million acres of commercial timberland in farm ownership, a recent report showed that only about 30 percent was managed with a view to future crops. Of the 202 million acres of industrial and other nonfarm commercial forest land, only about 14 percent was being managed with some thought to the future; and only 6 percent was under what the foresters call sustained-yield management—that is, managed for a steady yield of products of the highest value.

Is there any assurance or even likelihood that satisfactory forestry will become the general practice on a voluntary basis on all of our 341 million acres of privately owned commercial forest land?

Is there any assurance of permanent self-regulation by lumber companies or other forest industries? Are changes of ownership, drops in timber prices, and other factors apt to affect the permanence of voluntary plans? Do you think that there will continue to be too many destructive operators among the four-million-odd forest land owners to make voluntary plans dependable?

5. How about education? Will it bring about good forest management generally?

Fifty years ago, few Americans had ever heard of scientific forestry. Where good forest practices have been adopted, it is largely the result, directly or indirectly, of educational campaigns carried on over the years by the United States Forest Service and cooperating agencies. After half a century of educational effort, however, probably no more than 20 percent of the Nation's total private forest land area is as yet managed with a view to maintaining a continuous yield of timber.

The story of smoke abatement in St. Louis has been cited as an example of education versus regulation. For decades civic leaders tried by education and pleading to get citizens to take measures to stop the smoke nuisance. But a heavy smoke pall over the city continued to make St. Louis one of the dirtiest and unhealthiest cities in the country. Finally an anti-smoke ordinance was passed; the smoke nuisance was soon cleared up.

Educational campaigns for forest-fire prevention have been carried on for years. Yet we still have some 200,000 forest fires a year—90 percent of them the result of man's carelessness, ignorance, or indifference.

Education alone is a long, slow process. Progress in forest management in the last 50 years has not been satisfactory.

Which would you favor: Continued education or a compulsory plan (regulation) to stop destructive methods of timber cutting? Or both? Why?

It is generally agreed that continued educational effort will be necessary even if public regulation of forest practice is adopted. Any regulatory law must be generally understood and approved if it is to be effective.

How long can we afford to wait? The Nation's forest resources are still on the down-grade. If action is too long delayed, won't even more drastic restrictions become necessary in the national interest?

6. Just what should a forest-regulation plan aim at?

The plan proposed by the Department of Agriculture is aimed at making sure that all forest lands will be kept in reasonably productive condition. It suggests public control sufficient only to prevent practices which would result in destruction of forests or serious damage to them. This would be below the level of forest practice already applied voluntarily by the most progressive owners.

Does this proposal go far enough? Too far? Would it safeguard timber supplies for local, private forest industries, thus making for steady employment and stability of communities? Would it prevent forest products from becoming scarcer and higher priced? Would it protect the public-spirited and progressive timber operator from the cut-out-and-get-out operators, and establish basic "rules of the game" equally applicable to all?

7. What are the objections to public regulation?

Some objections that have been cited are:

- Conflict with the ideal of free private enterprise.
- Possibility of certain private interests gaining control of the regulatory machinery.
- Possibility of arbitrary or "bureaucratic" enforcement.
- Difficulty of administration and enforcement; lack of agreement as to "rules of practice."

Can these objections be met? Will regulation under democratic processes help to safeguard free enterprise? Is it a desirable midway position between public interest on the one hand and extreme "rugged individualism" on the other?

What examples do we have in the way of other desirable forms of public regulation? Railroads? Public utilities? Radio broadcasting? Food and drugs? Meat packing industry? Zoning laws? Forest fire protection?

How can a regulatory plan be made workable? How can public opinion and efforts be fully enlisted to support enforcement of the regulations? By keeping the rules of forest practice simple and effective? By making it possible to adjust them to fit various local conditions?

8. State or Federal regulation?

Several States have enacted laws intended in one way or another to regulate timber cutting. Nevada, New Hampshire, Louisiana, Idaho, and New Mexico have had such laws on the books for several years. Virginia, Oregon, Massachusetts, Maryland, California, Minnesota, and Mississippi have enacted forest regulation laws since 1940. In most cases the laws call only for leaving a few seed trees to scatter seed after a tract of timber is cut over. In some instances the laws prescribe minimum trunk diameter sizes below which trees should not be cut. Little attempt has been made in some States to enforce the laws, or actually carry out their provisions.

If your State is one of those which has enacted laws to regulate timber cutting, how has it worked out? Has it been enforced? Has it been effective in stopping forest depletion in your State? If not, why?

Should regulation of forest practices be handled exclusively by the individual States? (This would assume that forestry on private lands is solely a matter of State jurisdiction.)

Could State regulation be kept free of political influence? Can it be kept free of control by forest industries? Will State regulation meet the problem on a national scale?

Should regulation be handled directly by the Federal Government? Could it be safeguarded from arbitrary administration—that is, from failing to give enough consideration to the interests of the people affected?

Or should it be handled under a plan by which the Federal Government sets up basic standards through national legislation, and the States have an opportunity to apply them through their own laws? If so, should the Federal Government give financial aid to the States in carrying out the regulatory program? Should the Federal Government be authorized to act directly in any State which failed within a reasonable time to enact or enforce adequate regulatory measures? Would this Federal-State cooperative approach meet objections that might have been raised to regulation by the individual States or by the Federal Government alone?

9. What can our group or community do about the problem? Study and practice good forest management on our own holdings? Encourage the whole community to study the problem? Recommend appropriate action on a State or Nation-wide scale?

WHO IS CONCERNED ABOUT TIMBER?

Farmers?—Farmers own nearly one-third of our forest land. Rightly managed, it can keep on contributing to farm income. Whether or not you own timber, you need lumber, posts and poles, boxes, and other forest products in your farm operations.

Wage earners?—More than a million workers and their families get their living directly from lumbering, paper making, and other timber industries. The products of these industries provide jobs for millions more—carpenters, furniture makers, or rayon-textile workers, for instance; or railroad workers (forest products paid the third largest freight bill before the war). If timber gets scarcer, jobs get scarcer. Steady jobs in forest-supported industries can come only from steadily producing forests.

Businessmen?—Suppose you run a store, or have an insurance office, or some other business in a town where one of the biggest industries is a lumber mill.

If the timber nearby gives out, the mill shuts down, pay rolls stop, and you lose your customers. Forest pay rolls help to support many other industries and businesses. Some of the worst problems of unemployment, tax delinquency, and business shut-downs have followed timber exhaustion in localities dependent mainly on forests. And what happens in one community affects other communities. A national depression is merely the sum of a lot of local depressions.

Mr. and Mrs. John Citizen?—No matter where you live or what you do, you need forest products. Probably you take a lot of them for granted. Did you ever stop to think for instance, that face tissues, newspapers and books, radio cabinets, photographic film, paints, soaps, baseball bats, even the water that comes from your kitchen tap are wholly or partly products of the forest? And besides that, producing forests contribute to steady jobs and income, happy home and community life, and national prosperity.